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TO: ONMS Staff  
NCCOS Staff

FROM: Dan Basta, Director, ONMS  
Gary C. Matlock, Director, NCCOS

SUBJECT: ONMS/NCCOS Long Term Collaboration

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This memo has been developed to set out long term operating principles for the ONMS/NCCOS partnership that has evolved over the last three years. Since the partnership was defined by Dr. Nancy Foster in 1999, the interaction between the two programs has become a relationship that both Program Offices value highly. As the partnership has matured, it has become evident that a definition of joint operating principles and procedures would be useful for all staff. The intent of this memo is to clarify this relationship and the operation of this partnership.

The overarching goal of both ONMS and NCCOS is to effectively manage NOAA's National Marine Sanctuaries using the best available science. The measure of success is determined by meeting the goals of the National Marine Sanctuary Act and the individual Sanctuary management plans. ONMS is presently reviewing Sanctuary management plans to ensure that clearly definable goals and measures are contained within each plan. Based upon each revised plan, a scientific program to support, and where necessary, refine these goals and measures will be developed and/or updated. It is NCCOS' aim to work with ONMS to help refine this science-based management program by providing a research perspective in the formulation of the management goals. Working with ONMS staff, NCCOS will help develop a set of scientific requirements that support the management goals, define hypotheses and research actions to meet the requirements, implement the research, evaluate the effectiveness of the research activities in supporting these requirements, and provide recommendations regarding the consequences of management actions on Sanctuary resources and management goals.

Meeting the joint scientific requirements will be through financial contributions from both NCCOS and ONMS, as well as other funding mechanisms developed through partnerships. NCCOS' role in this partnership is to conduct scientific research directly addressing Sanctuary management's needs, to conduct anticipatory science or technology development that will benefit the Sanctuary program, and to provide technical assistance to Sanctuary managers on an as-needed basis in order to most effectively implement findings and address unforeseen issues.





### Priorities

The priorities for the next five years (03-07) will focus on 1) characterization of Sanctuary resources in the context of each Sanctuary management plan; 2) monitoring the changes in Sanctuary resources, particularly in response to management decisions, 3) conducting anticipatory science, and 4) addressing specialized topics that may be identified by ONMS and NCCOS management as particularly timely or promising. The primary emphasis in the next five years, however, is characterizing all sanctuaries, involving a broad range of characterization approaches, and developing monitoring and response programs that support the Sanctuary management goals. NCCOS will work with ONMS scientists and managers to complement existing activities in these areas since some sanctuaries have ongoing programs. NCCOS scientists will assist in developing standards, guidance documents, or other protocols that will help in the comparability of data and approaches among sanctuaries. Specific priorities for each Sanctuary are defined in the report "Sanctuary Science: Evaluation of Status and Information Need" (2002). These needs will be updated periodically by ONMS, based upon discussions with the Sanctuary managers and NCCOS researchers.

The following three categories of research will be the primary focus of the NCCOS/ONMS effort:

Characterization: Within five years, ONMS and NCCOS want all sanctuaries' resources to be described so that significant changes can be detected. Resources that are selected must be characterized so as to allow hypotheses to be tested regarding the source of those changes and to determine whether Sanctuary goals are being met.

Monitoring: Within five years, all sanctuaries will have monitoring programs that can detect change in the status of selected resources at a scale that provides the basis for testing hypotheses and predicting consequences of those changes to Sanctuary ecosystems under both management action and inaction. Application of forecasting techniques and technology that utilize this monitoring information will be emphasized.

Anticipatory Science: A limited, but consistent effort will be made to develop and test new technologies and techniques for monitoring the health of marine systems.

In addition, special projects will be considered. Projects may arise that demand immediate attention or hold great promise for solving specific Sanctuary issues. These scientific needs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

### Coordination

Annual guidance and proposal preparation. Overall coordination for the ONMS/NCCOS partnership is the responsibility of two Program Managers: Dr. Steve Gittings (ONMS/HQ) and Dr. Mark Fonseca (NCCOS/Center for Coastal Fisheries and Habitat Research



(CCFHR)). Each of them is responsible for setting up a coordinating mechanism(s) for their respective Program Office's activities to ensure that the needs of each Office are being met in a timely and efficient manner. In the summer of the preceding fiscal year, Mark and Steve will convene a meeting with the Office Directors, NCCOS scientists involved with ONMS research, and representative ONMS staff to discuss priorities for the next fiscal year. Based upon these discussions, Mark and Steve will be responsible for drafting annual scientific requirements that will be sent to the NCCOS scientists. This guidance memo will be signed by the Directors of ONMS and NCCOS and will define annual priorities, set levels of effort, detail necessary coordination/integration and state expected outputs.

Steve and Mark are to develop and implement a proposal process that fosters high quality, collaborative, timely and relevant science and that responds to the defined scientific requirements. They are to work with Principal Investigators to develop proposals that reflect the guidance issued and the integration of efforts. Final proposals will be sent to the ONMS and NCCOS Directors for concurrence. Following the receipt of final proposals, NCCOS will draft a memo to the Assistant Administrator of NOS from the Directors of NCCOS and ONMS, that transmits the final decisions on the upcoming fiscal year's activities and that details the financial contributions of both ONMS and NCCOS.

Project Implementation. Steve and Mark are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the funded projects. As part of the reporting requirement for these projects, they will apprise management on the progress of these joint projects. They are to set up evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of the scientific findings in both meeting manager's needs and achieving scientific credibility. The results of these evaluations will serve as the basis for the two Program Managers to redirect efforts when necessary. These reviews will address scientific quality, effectiveness in providing support to both the Sanctuary Managers and the national Offices, and efficiency and consistency in approach.

NCCOS P.I.s will be expected to participate in the annual Sanctuary managers meetings, as well as other topic-specific meetings, as requested by the Program Managers. Similarly, Sanctuary managers or scientists will participate in research coordination, planning or findings meetings convened by NCCOS, as appropriate.

Organizational Implementation. ONMS/NCCOS coordination will be augmented through the designation of NCCOS scientists to act as liaisons for each Sanctuary. Each NCCOS liaison will report to the NCCOS Program Manager, who will in turn be responsible for evaluation of their performance with respect to liaison duties. It will be the responsibility of the liaisons to know in great detail the issues, both scientific and policy, facing the Sanctuary for which they are liaison. Each NCCOS liaison will



work with other scientists, both within and external to NCCOS, to develop and refine scientific measures that will meet the Sanctuary's management needs, determine the significance of change in Sanctuary resources, and provide general scientific advice to the Sanctuary manager. The intent is to augment the scientific capability at each Sanctuary and strengthen NCCOS' understanding of the ONMS mission. A list of these contacts by Sanctuary will follow. (NOTE: It is anticipated that the liaisons will be scientists conducting research under this program.) NCCOS liaisons will be accountable to both the NCCOS/ONMS Program Manager and the respective NCCOS Center Director. "Contracts" (e.g., Performance Plans will be revised to reflect these dual reporting channels.) The NCCOS/ONMS Program Manager will report to the NCCOS Deputy Director for the performance of the ONMS coordination responsibilities.

#### **Reports:**

Annual. Two integrative partnership reports will be produced annually. ONMS, with support from NCCOS, will be responsible for developing a report prior to the beginning of each fiscal year summarizing the activities to be conducted during the coming year between NCCOS and ONMS. This annual plan will lay out priorities and justification, set out the schedule of projects and resources for each project, identify cross programmatic cross-linkages, and define the expected products linked to management needs. This report will be submitted to ONMS/NCCOS management for concurrence and signature before the beginning of the fiscal year being addressed.

Following each fiscal year, NCCOS, with support from ONMS, will produce a report summarizing the scientific results in the context of the management goals of each Sanctuary and the national program and define remaining research questions that need to be addressed to meet management needs.

Quarterly. In addition, each Principal Investigator (PI) will prepare serious reports of their activities and submit to ONMS and NCCOS according to defined procedures.

Staff Reporting. Formal reporting on the scientific activities in each Sanctuary will be through Steve Gittings and Mark Fonseca. This designation is not to inhibit other coordination among individual PIs and Sanctuary personnel; rather it is meant to ensure that one person from ONMS and one from NCCOS are aware of all significant scientific activities at a Sanctuary so that activities are well coordinated and that concerns, issues, successes etc. are accurately and consistently represented. These individual Sanctuary contacts are responsible for keeping Steve Gittings and Mark Fonseca aware of project status, issues, etc., and to provide them and the relevant Sanctuary Manager with their quarterly reports on each project. If a project covers several sanctuaries, the project lead will provide quarterly reports to Steve, Mark and the appropriate Sanctuary managers.

We anticipate that there will be subsequent documents addressing specific aspects of this partnership. Drafting of some of these documents has already been initiated in order to facilitate easier interactions between the program offices on specific topics. These should be reviewed and revised to reflect this memo's operating procedures, and coordinated through Mark and Steve.

**Responsibility:** All NCCOS Center Directors, Sanctuary Managers, and Headquarters staff share responsibility in the successful implementation of this partnership. This approach to operations is intended to improve the coordination both within each office and between the two offices. It is also intended to provide a focal point for the two office directors to have a synthesized and integrated assessment of the status of this partnership and its effectiveness in meeting defined needs. ONMS and NCCOS senior management will rely on Steve and Mark to be their primary counsel on this joint program. Periodically, both NCCOS and ONMS will review this framework to ensure that it is meeting its intended purpose, that it is producing timely and relevant products, and that it is effectively using Offices' resources.

Thank you for your cooperation and support in implementing this new approach to program partnerships.